



Al-Risala 1991

March

4-5 March 1991

In the editorial of the first issue of the *Aljamiat* weekly (September 1) which came out under my editorship in 1967, I expressed the view that of all the problems faced by the Muslims, the first and foremost, which required an immediate solution, was their inability to be realistic in their approach.

The writer was of the view, and still is, that there are all kinds of opportunities in India for Muslims to progress. There is no dearth of possibilities for Muslims to live as an honourable, prosperous and advanced community. Yet a certain deficiency in them has unnecessarily created all manner of problems for them. That deficiency is nothing more or less than their own lack of realism. If Muslims could just become realistic in their approach, nothing could stand in the way of their betterment.

The new turn of events in the wake of the happenings of October 30, 1990, is evidently a matter of great anguish to them, but I am convinced of the aptness here of this verse of the Quran: "You may hate a thing although it is good for you." (2:216) In this seemingly very disturbing situation, a great good lies hidden.

What is this great good? It is the necessity it creates for adopting a very realistic approach. The greatest secret of success in the world of today is the ability to think and act realistically. Human nature itself inclines man to realism. The so-called Muslim leaders, however, have misled Muslims by their emotionalism and their superficiality. Now the outcome of recent events has made their incompetence as clear as daylight. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that now Muslims will free themselves from the unhealthy influence of their misguided leaders, and will chart a course of action in accordance with nature, the Qur'an and the example set by the Prophet.

The Prophet of Islam was the most realistic person in history. That is why his success was the greatest ever achieved by anyone. The present situation, which is very much on a parallel with the adversity faced by the Prophet, has brought Muslims to a point where they will of themselves become realistic. And this new turn to their lives is certainly the greatest guarantee of success and progress.

The whole system of the earth and the heavens is based on reality. Man too can succeed in this world simply by conceding to this reality. It would be a matter of great satisfaction if Muslims could now discover this secret, which is the sure ladder to success.

The Message of Nature

It is a very dear wish of mine that Muslims should try to understand nature's signals and hear the message it relays at every moment throughout the entire universe. It would be a very great thing if they could appreciate that *nature's constant message is one of hope*.

Remember that the approaching night means not just darkness, but also the brightness of morning, which will appear just a few hours later. Just as night is always a prelude to morning, so is the winter the harbinger of spring. This is an eternal law of nature. Just as this law applies to the material world, so does it apply to the human world – and it certainly does not leave out Muslims!

Muslims at the moment are apparently facing highly adverse circumstances. But these circumstances are a blessing in disguise. They are part of a divine scheme to turn base metals into gold, i.e. to turn the weak and the inept into the strong and the successful.

The Hadith states that 'patience is the weapon of the believer.' It is a 'weapon' in the sense of being a kind of training course which awakens and perfects man's hidden potential. Patience brings maturity of capability. Patience makes man the possessor of a high moral character. It gives man the strength to come up to the high standard set by Islamic ethics. In short patience turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. Patience, indeed, is the greatest treasure an individual or a group may possess.

Patience is in no way synonymous with pessimism. It is the harbinger of good tidings, and a sign that God's succour has come nigh. The Qur'an dearly states that God is with those who are patient. Those who prove themselves to be so will, by God's grace, become the leaders of the world.

Tomorrow

Mrs. Benazir Bhutto had been Prime Minister of Pakistan for only twenty months when, on August 6, 1990, she was removed from the premiership by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan with the help of the Pakistan army.

It was said that, during her rule, corruption had reached its zenith. Many stories on the subject were carried by the daily newspapers at that time, one of which was a detailed account published by the *Hindustan Times* on August 20, 1990. It was based on a report sent in by its Lahore-based correspondent, Mr. B. Venkat Narain. Citing many instances, the report said that cash and property worth millions of rupees had been misappropriated by the party members and relatives of Benazir Bhutto throughout her rule. "Friends and relatives of the lady's and those of her controversial husband, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, were busy enriching themselves as though there would be no tomorrow." (p. 12).

What has been said about Benazir Bhutto by this reporter in this English-language newspaper is equally true of the entire human race, particularly when viewed in the context of the life hereafter. Man is excessively involved in his "today". Consciously, or unconsciously, he takes it for granted that his "tomorrow" or his "6th of August" will never come.

People refuse to acknowledge the truth, just as if they are never going to be questioned about it. People mindlessly utter falsehoods, as if they will never be taken to task for them. They consider it legitimate to take another's life, usurp another's property and assail another's honour, just as if they are never to be held accountable for having tried to turn the unlawful into the lawful.

People transgress moral codes for their own personal benefit, as if the day will never come when they shall have to explain why they saw fit to break God's eternal law. Will they have the courage to stand up in the divine court, and say that it was only for temporary gain?

Superior Performance

A report with a New York dateline, reproduced in the *Times of India* of April 13, 1989, (Section 2, page 4) and titled 'Japan's Bid to Excel the US in Supercomputers' states that the dominance of the US in the field of supercomputers – hitherto regarded as unassailable – is now seriously in doubt. According to the analysts of an American corporation, who drew up this report on the basis of an in-depth survey, a supercomputer made by Japan was to come to the market in 1990 which would be the fastest-working machine in the world.

Now on the market, this computer, named by the Japanese S.X-X, works so fast that it can perform 20 billion operations of scientific calculations in one second, which is 25 per cent faster than the most sophisticated American computer. Besides its superior performance, its other great advantage is that it is relatively less expensive.

The importance of this supercomputer is not limited only to scientific research, oil exploration, weather forecasts, etc., but has also a considerable bearing on national security, it being used extensively in the production of nuclear weapons.

The latest Japanese computers have ushered the world into a new industrial age. The present computers, which were once 'the latest' have now become 'traditional', 'conventional', or simply 'out-of-date'. One of the more important aspects of Japan's development of computers is that it has placed it in a position of superiority even in the military field.

Although America destroyed Japan in 1945 by using the atom bomb, it could not take away Japan's potential; the Japanese were so successful in their natural reconstruction that the whole course of their history was changed within a mere 45 years. The supercomputer of the Japanese has, therefore, proved more powerful than the super bomb of the Americans. Destruction, no matter how massive, never puts an end to opportunities for construction. And the power of construction far exceeds that of destruction. Of that there can be no doubt.

The Sign of God

It was the seventh of September, 1982, when I was standing in front of a tree in a hilly region of Africa. I had never before seen such a tree. It seemed to be a sign straight from God, so strange and wonderful did it appear to me. Its delicate flowers, its chiseled fruit, its geometrically designed leaves – all of these seemed to call out that they had not come into being by themselves, but had been made by some ineffable Creator.

Every tree in this world is, in truth, an example of God's artistry. But since I had come across this kind of tree for the first time, I felt all the more inspired by it. On seeing this strange and beautiful African tree, I spontaneously exclaimed, "It seems that all the things in this world bear the stamp, 'Made by God', but then God, having made all these things, hid himself away from mortal sight. People must, therefore, recognize their Maker through His Creation. It is the sight of God's Creation which enables people to discover the presence of God in this world.

An experienced engineering expert can tell at first glance whether a machine has been made in the Soviet Union, the U.S.A., Japan or Britain, because of special features in its design and performance. It does not, however, take an expert to see the uniqueness of design and performance of all those innumerable natural 'machines' which perform their duty in our world with such perfect regularity. These machines do not, of course carry labels showing their place of manufacture, but the exceptional qualities of their design and their distinctive performance are, in themselves, a clear indication who their Maker was.

None of nature's phenomena carry labels stating explicitly who their Maker was, but in a more subtle, meaningful way, they all bear His divine stamp. If one is sufficiently discerning to go beneath the surface to the underlying reality, one will inevitably exclaim, "Undoubtedly, this has been made by God! No one else could have produced such marvels of perfection!"

Mechanical Interpretation

A military manoeuvre was performed by the American navy in July, 1983, off the coast of San Francisco, the whole process being computerized. During the artillery firing drills, the computer developed some defect, as a result of which the direction of the firing was totally reversed. According to the programming the shelling was directed at a far-off place in the sea, but due to this reversal, the shells began hitting a Mexican Cargo ship instead.

We often come across such news about computers. Why do they go 'on the blink' and fail to carry out their orders properly? It is because they are only material machines, totally devoid of brain. Similarly, had the universe been simply a material machine, as is generally held by the atheists of modern times, it could never have functioned so accurately and flawlessly as it does. The earth and all the human settlements on it would have been completely destroyed as if ravaged by an earthquake. In the wake of universal accidents, not only the universe, but also those who audaciously seek to place a material interpretation upon the existence of the universe would have been destroyed altogether.

"There is no creator of the universe, it is but a material machine". This sentence reads very well, – a good, grammatical sentence. But it loses its validity when it is matched with reality. For there is an inherent contradiction in these conceptions. This sentence would have been correct if any self-made and self-operated machine had actually existed. But there is no such thing. All the machines we know of are made and operated by 'men' and they are certainly not free from defects.

Then how is it possible for a flawless workshop of the universe to have come into existence by itself, and to have continued to function so perfectly from time immemorial?

Sitting among others, without distinction

The Prophet came to see Abdullah ibn Amr Ibn'ul-Aas. The latter offered him a leather pillow to sit on, but the Prophet sat on the ground, and left the pillow lying in between them.

Iman Means Reaching God while Living in this World.

The connection of an electric bulb with a power house is no simple matter. It entails the connecting up of a non-lighting element with something which has the exceptional power to light things up. The immediate result of such an action is that an ostensibly "dead" bulb becomes 'alive'. Somewhat similar is man's relation to God. Just as a dark bulb will pour forth a fountain of light as soon as it is connected with a power source, so will a man become radiant with divine energy as soon as he makes contact with God.

God is the greatest reality of our world. That is why finding God is not a particularly simple matter. But once a man has done so, it has the most profound effect upon his whole psyche. It is like a volcanic eruption which shakes up his whole existence, an outpouring of lava which engulfs his total personality. After the discovery of God, no one can remain the same as he was before. A believer in God, in the true sense of the word, is one whose life undergoes a complete transformation the moment he finds the Almighty.

The realization of God, which is called faith (*iman*) in the *Shariah*, is the greatest experience of a man's entire life. To believe in God means that this belief has become the basis for his way of living. It is like a beam of light which illuminates his whole existence. It is the hue which colours every facet of his lifestyle.

Faith is another name for having realized the presence of God. It means losing oneself in the greatness of God, becoming totally immersed in knowledge of the divine. It so moves one that one's feelings are transformed into a hymn to God, and one's lips start spontaneously praising the Almighty. *Iman*, indeed is an earthquake which is produced within a man through the realization of God. It is a flood which courses through man's being, replenished as it is by the blessings and inspiration of God. If *iman* means to find God, then finding God means finding everything, what more is there left to find, once having found God?

A Bright Future

Muslims should never forget that they are the *Ummah* of a Prophet who has been acknowledged by historians to be the most successful individual in the entire history of the world. According to the Qur'an, he came into this world to set a shining example (*uswa-e-hasana*) to all human beings. It would be quite correct to say that not only was he the most successful human being himself, but that he moreover showed us the secret of unparalleled success through the example of his life.

By being supremely successful himself, he set the example of supreme success for his own and succeeding generations.

It is a matter of historical record that the Prophet of Islam was faced with the severest of difficulties. Beset by hardships, not to speak of persecution, he nevertheless scaled the heights of personal success. An orientalist has aptly written of him that "he faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure."

This is what the Qur'an means by saying that "every hardship is followed by ease." (94:5). This Quranic teaching, along with the example of the Prophet's life, shows that there is no justification for the Muslims to feel bowed down by frustration no matter what the circumstances. When the Creator of the Universe has Himself declared for all eternity that 'every hardship is followed by ease,' that surely indicates that every disadvantage is invariably accompanied by an advantage. That being so, what is there left to fear?

The truth of this message of the Qur'an has been proved right to a remarkable extent. Did not the Prophet, despite all manner of setbacks, achieve the greatest success in history? In a similar situation, Muslims should always remain hopeful. They should never allow their hearts to be weighed down by despair.

Muslims should realize that they are standing on the threshold of a very bright future. This is the eternal message that their Prophet has conveyed to them.

The Realization of God

Say: I am no prodigy among the apostles; nor do I know what will be done with me or you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and my only duty is to give plain warning. (Qur'an 46:9).

There is a *hadith* which expresses the same disavowal of superior knowledge. In the course of a conversation, the Prophet once said 'By God, I do not know, even although I am a messenger of God, what will be done with me, and what will be done with you. (*Al-Tafsir al- Mazhari*, vol. 8. p.396).

What is expressed in the *hadith* is an exhortation to accept human servitude to God as the prime necessity. That is, man, being God's servant, should always show humility, even if he is a messenger of God, rather than make announcements about the fate awaiting mankind in the hereafter.

Doubtless, God has made it known that He will bless his messengers and the true believers. But when a servant of God, who has realized God, gives thought to the fact that he is all-powerless and God is all-powerful, and that his fate in the hereafter rests entirely in the hands of God, then, in spite of his conviction of God's blessing, he starts trembling. The thought of God's greatness leaves him shivering in awe of Him.

On the one hand, he is wholly convinced of God's blessings, but, on the other, he fears God's chastisement. This state of affairs makes him stand exactly half-way between hope and fear, from the psychological viewpoint.

The truth is that the words, "I do not know what will be done with me, and what will be done with you", convey the highest state of realization. The higher the realization of God, the more the feeling of God's greatness will keep increasing. It is sentiments such as these that are expressed by those who have achieved true realization of God.

A man who had incurred the displeasure of Caliph Umar was brought before him. The Caliph said to him, "I am angry with you, but because I go in fear of God, I shall not strike you."

Nature Bears Witness

If one were to say that by mixing crushed pieces of stone and wood, petrol would be produced, that would only make people laugh. Certainly no ordinary human being has the power to make such things happen. But far stranger and more complex events of a similar nature take place in this world every day. Nature's chemistry is constantly producing phenomena which, to the uninitiated, appear unintelligible mysteries.

Let us take hydrogen and oxygen, for example. When nature mixes up these two gases in a particular ratio: the resulting combination takes the form of a liquid – crystal-clear water. When carbon and hydrogen are mixed together under particular conditions, another very precious fluid is formed – crude oil. When certain salts and minerals are mixed with carbon, life comes into existence. When a magnetic field and movement are brought together, the astonishing force called electricity is produced. In a similar way, when a magnetic field and electricity are brought together, an immensely powerful movement comes into being. When a seed is sown in the soil, it becomes transformed with wood, leaves, flowers and fruits, etc.

Innumerable miracles of this type keep occurring in this world, at every moment, and man is dumbfounded on seeing them. He is a witness to the fact that neither do these objects have any power in them to come into existence on their own, nor does man possess the power to create anything by himself. Then how is all this happening? In an attempt to explain these happenings, he says that all phenomena are a part of God. It is God Himself who is manifesting himself in innumerable forms.

The Qur'an, however, rejects such explanations as misleading. According to the Qur'an, natural phenomena are not part of God, but have come into existence at His command. Rather than God manifesting himself in these forms He has created them with His divine powers.

Since time immemorial poets have been inspired by the beauty of the stars and man from ancient times has seen the moon as a god.

The truth, however, is quite the reverse. The stars are huge balls of fire, while the moon and other planets are just rocks, bereft of water and of plant life. Despite being imaginably vast, the universe is hostile to the existence of a creature like man. In all the known universe only the earth favours man's survival and permits him to bring a civilization into being. The earth, standing out as an exception in the limitless universe, is a clear proof of the existence of an intelligent being who consciously created such circumstances here on earth, as would remain favourable to the continuing existence of the human species.

14 March 1991

To be sparing in one's speech is a sign of sincerity

Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he had seen no one better than the companions of the Prophet. "They only asked the Prophet about thirteen matters – all of which are mentioned in the Quran – until the day he died." Ibn 'Abbas also said that the companions only used to question the Prophet on matters which were relevant to them.

Avoiding retaliation for the sake of God

While the Muslims were returning from the Bani Mustalaq campaign, A'ishah was detained by the loss of a necklace. She found the necklace and, losing trace of the Muslim party, went to sleep at the place where they had put up camp the night before. There she was spotted by a Companion. He sat her on his camel and, himself holding the reins, set off for Medina. When they reached home, the hypocrites used this episode as an opportunity to spread false scandals about A'ishah. One of those engaged in this scandal-mongering was Mistah, a relative of Abu Bakr, who received a monthly stipend from his comparatively wealthy kinsman. When Abu Bakr discovered Mistah's role in the slander against his daughter A'ishah, he swore an oath that he would not give Mistah any money in future. Then this verse of the Quran was revealed: "Let not the honourable and rich among you swear not 'to give to their kindred, the poor, and those who have emigrated for the cause of God. Rather, let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish God to forgive you? He is Forgiving, Merciful." (24:22) "Surely, I would like God to forgive me," said Abu Bakr, on hearing of the revelation of this verse.

(Seerat ibn Hisham)

Shall We Learn a Lesson?

The following report was published in the October '83 issue of World Health, the monthly magazine of the World Health Organisation published from WHO Av. Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland:

"Eight years ago, 197 people became ill on a long-distance flight. Ham Omelettes had been contaminated by a cook with an infected sore on his hand, and poor temperature control in the kitchen and on board the plane had allowed the organism (*Staphylococcus aureus*) to grow in the food and produce a toxin. The infection sent 144 of the victims to hospital, though all eventually recovered. Nonetheless the airline catering manager took the blame for the incident and committed suicide."

The catering manager's sole fault was that he had supplied unwholesome food to his passengers, which made them ill. Even although the mistake was actually someone else's, he realized with agonizing clarity that the ultimate responsibility lay with himself. And so he killed himself. A much graver mistake, with consequences on a far wider scale, has been made by the leaders of our country, who have mislead, and are still misleading our people in the name of *dharm* (religion) and *rashtra* (country). Quite mindlessly and without any reasoning, they have driven their followers in unconscionable directions. Yet, after witnessing the ensuing terrible and devastating madness, such as has culminated in inhuman massacres, not one of them has stopped to consider where the responsibility lies and, certainly, no one has thought fit to commit suicide.

Our leaders seek to present their devils's cavortings as *rashtriya Pravrutti* (national activity)! They call their foolish acts *dharmayuddh* (crusade). If people are uprooted they give this the beautiful label of *aahooti* (sacrifice)! A mad frenzy results in large-scale looting and killing and burning so they call the victims *hutatma* (martyrs)!

Those who are not even worthy to be food managers in an airline have taken upon themselves the responsibility for solving the far more complicated affairs of our society. God save this country!

Our Failure to Perform *Da'wah*

When Islam came to the world, the greatest empire of the time was the Christian empire, which was divided into two major parts, the western and the eastern. The western wing, Europe, was called the Roman empire, its capital being Rome in Italy, while the eastern wing, Asia and Africa, was known as the Byzantine empire, its capital being Constantinople (Istanbul) in Turkey.

During the last days of the Prophet of Islam, the Muslims had military encounters with the Romans at the border of Syria, from which the Muslims emerged victorious. Within the span of a century, they managed to conquer almost the whole of the eastern wing of the Christian empire, including their religious places like Syria and Palestine. Later the Muslims advanced towards Sicily and Spain, and finally entered France. They entered eastern Europe through Turkey and reached Vienna in Austria. In this way, they captured almost the whole of the eastern wing of the Christian, or Roman empire, and even took possession of a part of the western wing;

The crusades were in reaction to this defeat inflicted on the western Christians at the hands of the Muslims. The Christian world could not bear such a defeat and humiliation at the hands of a foreign nation. All the Christian countries of Europe, therefore, united to attack the Muslim world.

The Crusades continued at intervals for about two hundred years (1095-1271). During this period the Christians had partial and temporary successes, but finally, under the leadership of Sultan Salahuddin, the Muslims emerged victorious, inflicting a crushing defeat on the Christians. *The Pears Cyclopaedia* meaningfully comments: "Millions of lives and an enormous amount of treasure were sacrificed in these enterprises, and when all was done, Jerusalem remained in the possession of the 'infidels'."

This event, which had such a devastating outcome for the Christians, took place eight hundred years ago. Exactly the same thing has taken place in modern times, with the only difference that now it is the Muslims who are suffering. In present times, once again, in spite of 200 years of sacrifice on the part of the Muslims, Jerusalem remains in the possession of those whom Muslims consider the least deserving of it.

The Christian nations might not have been able to win the crusades, but they did fully succeed in their latter-day colonial wars. Over the centuries, they subjected all the Muslim empires and then, directly or indirectly, they managed to gain political and cultural domination all over the world.

As a reaction to this, Muslims all over the world waged war against these western nations. However, after a period of two hundred years of (thirteenth and fourteenth century hijrah) war and confrontation, the domination of the Christian nations is still a reality. "Jerusalem" still remains in the possession of the "infidels".

The reason for this failure, despite enormous efforts, is that the task of communicating God's word -the real mission of the Muslims as a community (*Ummah*) – has been abandoned. Muslims should never lose sight of the fact that it is the performance of this very duty which will entitle them to receive the succour of God. Unless Muslims rise up to this task of communicating the divine message, all their efforts will continue to be wasted. As the *Qur'an* says about them: 'Vain are their works.' (16:105). Their state will be like that of the Israelites as recorded in the Bible:

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways. (Haggai, 1:6-7)

Putting oneself in others' shoes and not entertaining suspicions

The Prophet's wife, Aishah was once slanderously accused of misconduct. While the rumours were at their height Abu Ayub Ansari's wife mentioned to her husband what people were saying about Aishah. Abu Ayub refused on principle to believe it and replied that those who said such things were liars. "Can you imagine yourself doing such a thing?" he asked his wife. "Certainly not," she replied. "Well, how much more chaste and pure Aishah is than you. Why should such actions be attributed unto her?" said Abu Ayub to his wife.

Bloodless Revolution

From time to time, throughout the history of man, revolution has become a moral imperative. It is lamentable, however, that such action has almost inevitably meant a bloodbath. No right-minded person has ever found this desirable, yet, history has shown that almost no one has ever succeeded in bringing about a bloodless revolution. All the revolutions recorded in history – with one notable exception – have entailed mayhem and massacres. The only man who proved capable of bringing about a truly bloodless revolution was the Prophet of Islam. If this revolution were to be deleted from the annals of history, societal change would have a sorry record, and bloodless revolution would remain an unattainable myth for the Prophet's successors. As it stands, it is a beacon of rectitude for those who wish to be guided by its light.

Consider the heavy toll of human life in the confrontations between the monarchy and the people in the French revolution, which began with the storming of the Bastille in 1789. The figures have been placed at one million. The actual number of those who lost their lives in the socialist revolution of Russia in the twentieth century remains unknown, but it has been estimated to be not less than 10 million. Comparatively fewer people were killed in the American war of independence (1775-1783), but still, not less than 50,000 people lost their lives. In the first world war, the death toll rose to 7.5 million and in the second world war the number of casualties was 60 million.

At the time of the Prophet's death, he was the undisputed leader of an area measuring about 1.2 million sq.m., having brought about an intellectual and moral revolution on a vastness of scale which was unprecedented. Yet, in the whole process, only 1018 people were killed, 259 being Muslims and 759 being non-Muslims. So far as the immensity of the event is concerned, this number is quite negligible. As revolutions go, this one can undoubtedly be described as bloodless.

Every leader claims to be ushering in bloodless revolution, but how seldom this proves to be true. The reason is that if one wants a revolution to be bloodless, one has, oneself, to bathe in blood. This is the price that none of the leaders are willing to pay. Bloody revolutions are the result of clashes and confrontations, whereas bloodless revolutions are brought about slowly and painstakingly with a great deal of patience, and there is no more difficult a task for a man than the exercise of patience.

Exercising patience means taking the jolts oneself instead of letting others suffer. Victory may be won without fighting, but to win such a victory, if the truth be told, one has to do battle with one's own self. Since normal mortals are, as a rule, unable to do so, they fail to win victories without bloodshed.

How was it that the Prophet succeeded in bringing about a bloodless revolution? This becomes quite plain when we study his life. For full thirteen years in Mecca, he and his companions were subjected to

all kinds of persecution. He was hurt not only psychologically, by words, but also physically, by stones. Despite all such forms of persecution, the Prophet never once retaliated in reaction. He never initiated a battle, but continued to suffer all kinds of privations unilaterally, and never became incensed in the face of all kinds of provocations.

All he did was to leave Mecca quietly. Neither did he complain that he and his companions were being compelled to leave Mecca, nor did he care for the fact that by taking such an action, people would accuse him of being a coward.

Once he had left Mecca, the Makkan non-Muslims waged war against him. Even then, he always tried to avoid war. For instance, at Ahzab, when the enemy had come in large numbers to do battle, the Prophet and his companions managed to dig a long trench to create a barrier between his people and the enemy. He did battle only in defence, and only when there was no other way left for him but to take on the enemy. Only three major battles took place in which the Prophet had to take part (Badr, Uhud and Hunayan). The Muta war also took place during the life of the Prophet, but he did not take part in it.

The domination that he achieved in Arabia was not through war. It was rather through that “peace treaty” which is called in the Qur’an the “clear victory”. (48:1).

The ‘Peace Treaty’, aimed at bringing about a bloodless revolution was akin to bathing in blood himself. But he was willing to bathe himself in blood so that the blood of others should not be shed.

The domination that the Prophet gained in Arabia was not through war but through *dawah*. It was to throw open the door to *dawah* that he even consented to make a peace treaty by conceding all the conditions laid down by the enemy. It is this peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah that is referred to in the Qur’an in these words: “We have given you a glorious victory.” (48:1)

The peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah is a historical proof of the fact that the power of peace is far greater than the power of war. By making peace unilaterally (that is, by accepting all the conditions of the enemy) at Hudaibiyyah, the Prophet has given a practical demonstration of this great truth. However, it is not a simple matter. To bring about an event of this nature, patience is required. And there is no doubt about it that no sacrifice is harder to make than to have patience in this world.

The Call of Paradise

Bashir says that when the Muslims of Mecca first emigrated to Medina, the water of their adopted home did not agree with them. A man from the Bani Ghaffar tribe owned a well known as Beyr Rumah. The emigrants took a liking to the water of this well, and the owner used to sell them a flask in exchange for one Mudd of grain. The Prophet said to the owner of the well: "Sell it to me in exchange for a spring in Paradise." "I and my household have no other source of livelihood," the man explained. "I can't just give it away to you like that." Uthman ibn Affan, having heard about this incident, bought the well of Rumah from its owner for 35,000 dirhams, then came to the Prophet. "Will I also have a spring in Paradise in exchange for this well?" he asked. "Indeed you will!" said the Prophet. And Uthman donated the well to the Muslims.

(Tabarani)

Islam – The Creator of the Modern Age

The Solar System

An atmosphere of free investigation is vital to the progress of science. In former times, it was difficult for such an atmosphere to exist because of the prevalence of a whole range of man-made beliefs. There were many cases in those days of intelligent, scholarly men having come upon scientific truths in the course of their intellectual pursuits without, however, these truths having gained any credence, because the moment they were aired in public, they were found to be inconsistent with currently held superstitious beliefs. This caused the discoverers and their discoveries to be rejected out of hand. New thinking, in such an ambience, could hardly be expected to make any progress.

A case in point is that of Socrates, the renowned Greek philosopher, who was condemned to death by drinking hemlock in 399 B.C. He was accused of ignoring the gods worshipped by the Athenians, of making new inventions in religion and of corrupting the youth of Athens.

. Similarly, when Galileo (1564-1642) the Italian astronomer, declared that the Copernican system of the planets moving round the sun was true the church was offended. He was sentenced by a religious court and put in prison. When he saw that nothing but death awaited him, he had to recant his theories before the Inquisition. With both his hands on the Bible, he admitted being in the wrong, and withdrew his claim, describing it as 'far-fetched' and 'abominable'.

There was nothing exceptional in this. This was the common reaction to Christian scholars of those times. The search for new truths and the discovery of nature's secrets remained a forbidden pasture to them for centuries. Such endeavours were vilified as black magic, the result of satanic teachings, the rotation of the solar system being a notorious case in point. In such circumstances, it was impossible for research and investigation to make any progress.

Such work was begun in the Middle Ages for the first time by the Muslims, since Quranic teachings had removed all those mental blocks which had been in the way of such scientifically-minded people as Galileo. It was only after the Islamic revolution that a sound viewpoint on such matters could be fostered. But once scientific activity had got under way, its progress remained unhampered in succeeding centuries, and we are now all familiar with its spectacular culmination in present -day discoveries.

The astronomer who is said to have studied the solar system and presented the heliocentric theory for the first time was Greek, known by the name of Aristarchus of Samos. He died in 270 B.C. His theory of the sun being in the centre and of the earth revolving around it did not, however, gain currency at that time.

Then came the age of Ptolemy in the second century A.D. Ptolemy's astronomical system represented the earth as the fixed centre of the universe, with the sun, moon, stars and planets revolving around it. This theory appeared to be in conformity with the beliefs developed by the early Christians. These beliefs were given the final seal of approval at the famous Church Council held in Nicaea, a city in Asia Minor, in 325. After Constantine the Great (280-337) accepted Christianity, the faith spread all over Roman territory. Invested with tremendous power, the Christians now patronised the theory of Ptolemy in particular. The curtain of darkness fell over the theory of Aristarchus.

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (1984). "There was no further scope for cosmology in the model, which continued to be taught and used almost everywhere until the 17th century". (18/1013)

The Muslims, however, did not fall into the error of regarding the non-sacred as sacred. They felt free to reflect upon such matters with open minds in a purely academic way. When they found that the heliocentric theory was more rational, they accepted it without any hesitation.

The heliocentric theory developed by Aristarchus (310-230 BC) is regarded today as an established fact. (See the writings of Edward Mc Nall Burns). But, for about four hundred years this theory was relegated to the background, while Ptolemy's geocentric theory dominated people's minds all over the world. It was not until 1496 that Copernicus arrived at the conclusion that the earth was not the centre of the universe. After a long period of research, he formulated the theory that the planets revolved around the sun. But, fearing the opposition of the church, he refrained from publishing the conclusions of his research till 1543.

Of all the subjects to which the Spanish Muslims turned their attention, science afforded the greatest scope for development. In fact, in this field, their successes were such as had no parallel in history. They distinguished themselves in astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine, etc. "Despite their reverence for Aristotle, they did not hesitate to criticize his notion of a universe of concentric spheres with the earth at the centre, and they admitted the possibility that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun. (p. 264).

If the Muslims were able to produce the correct hypothesis on the Solar System, it was entirely due to Islam having broken down the walls of conditioned thinking which had proved such a barrier to intellectual progress. As soon as these artificial barriers were swept away, the caravan of human thought began to go on its way at an ever-increasing speed until it reached the highly advanced stage in which we find it now in the twentieth century.

The Joy of a pious household

Miqdad, explaining the state of affairs in the Prophet's time, told how in a single household there would be some who accepted Islam and some who did not. A believer would see his own father, son or brother in a state of unbelief and this would cause him tremendous distress. Faith in God having opened his heart, he would realize that were his -kith and kin to remain in a state of unbelief, they would be doomed to Hell-fire. For this reason believers derived no joy from seeing those of their relatives who did not believe. Believers caught in such a predicament were taught in the Quran to pray in these words: "Lord, give us joy in our wives and children and make us examples to those who fear You,"

(Hilyatul Auliya)